

SECTION A.

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

TRENDS IN BACHELOR'S DEGREES AWARDED TO RACIAL/ETHNIC MINORITIES IN SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

The number of bachelor's degrees in science and engineering (S&E) fields awarded to underrepresented minority students showed robust growth in the early 1990s, after a period of relatively slow growth from 1985 to 1990. From 1990 to 1994, the number of baccalaureate recipients with degrees in S&E increased

44 percent for blacks, 47 percent for Hispanics, and 58 percent for American Indians. The percentage increases for underrepresented minority groups were higher than the percentage increases found among white recipients (10 percent) and Asian recipients (36 percent) (table A).

In 1994 there were similar numbers of black bachelor's degree recipients in S&E (26,289) and Asian recipients (26,420). The number of Hispanics earning bachelor's degrees in S&E fields hit an all-time high of 20,529, as did American Indians, 2,004.

Even with this growth, minority students still comprised 28 percent of the "college-age" population (18–24 years old) in 1994, whereas baccalaureates earned by underrepresented minority students accounted for only 12 percent of the total S&E degrees in 1994.

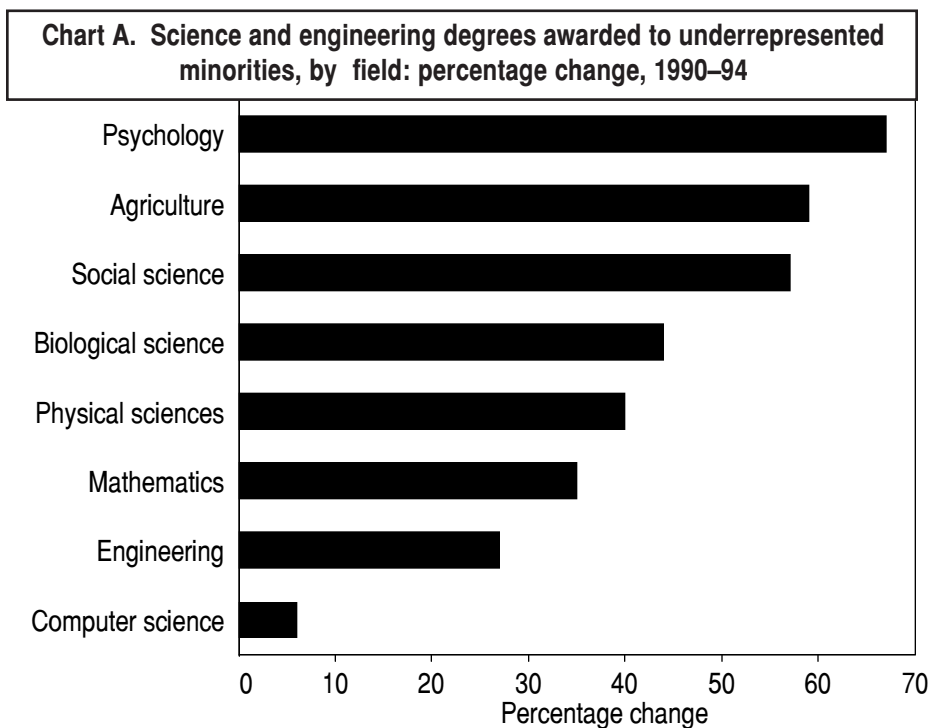
Among underrepresented minority groups, the increases in baccalaureate degrees vary by field of science or engineering. From 1990 to 1994 the percentage increases in baccalaureates awarded to underrepresented groups ranged from a 6-percent increase in computer science degrees to an increase of 67 percent in psychology degrees (chart A).

Table B. S&E bachelor's degree recipients, by broad field: percent

Table A. Science and engineering bachelor's degrees, by race/ethnicity of recipients: percentage change, 1985–90 and 1990–94

Race/ethnicity	1985–90	1990–94
White, non-Hispanics	-4	10
Asians or Pacific Islanders	46	36
Underrepresented minorities, total	10	46
Black, non-Hispanics	7	44
Hispanics	16	47
American Indians or Alaskan Natives	-8	58

SOURCE: NSF/SRS tabulations of National Center for Education Statistics Completions Survey data



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Table B. S&E bachelor's degree recipients, by broad field: percentage distribution, 1994			
Race/ethnicity	Engineering	Natural sciences	Social sciences
Underrepresented minorities	12	29	59
Whites	15	31	54
Asians	25	39	36

SOURCE: NSF/SRS tabulations of National Center for Education Statistics Completions Survey data

Degree awards have increased more in the social sciences, fields in which there is a slightly higher concentration of S&E bachelor's degree recipients

among underrepresented minorities (59 percent) than among whites (54 percent).

Among S&E baccalaureate recipients in 1994, a slightly lower percentage of underrepresented minorities majored in engineering (12 percent) than did whites (15 percent), and the natural sciences (29 percent) than did whites (21 percent) (table B).

Although these slight differences exist, the gaps once found between the field choices of underrepresented minorities and whites have virtually disappeared. One-third of all bachelor's degree recipients of all racial/ethnic groups (except Asians, at 48 percent) chose S&E fields in 1994.